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BEMAN GATES AND THE *MARIETTA INTELLIGENCER* 1839-56

by **GERALD S. GREENBERG**

INTRODUCTION

Marietta, Ohio is a city with a population of 15,000 located at the point where the Ohio River meets the Muskingum in the southeastern part of the state, on the West Virginia border. It was the first legal settlement in the old Northwest Territory. Through the years its residents deliberately avoided rapid industrial growth, watching as Cincinnati and Columbus surpassed them in size and importance.¹ More readily, however, Marietta's citizens welcomed the journalists who brought them information and education on the frontier. Beginning in 1801, thirteen years after its founding, the town began to be served by a series of enterprising newspapers, the most remarkable of which was the *Marietta Intelligencer*. Its editor Beman Gates was just twenty-one years old when he agreed to manage the paper in 1839. The next seventeen years would prove most successful.

The *Intelligencer*, a spirited voice of the Whig Party, was to revolutionize journalism in Marietta, then a town of 1,800. From its inception, the newspaper was larger and more attractive than its competition. *Intelligencer* news arrived sooner because paid correspondents relayed reports from Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Columbus. Once telegraph lines were installed, the *Intelligencer* began experimenting with same-day news coverage. In addition, Beman Gates ensured that his newspaper served the community responsibly as an advocate of public education, a calm voice in time of crisis, and a chronicler of regional history.

MARIETTA'S NEWSPAPER HISTORY

Virtually all of Marietta's newspapers trace their history from one of two lines of descent² - the *Gazette / Register* family of newspapers (to which the *Intelligencer* belongs) or the *Pilot / Times* family whose descendant, the *Marietta Times*, serves the community today. The two branches of Marietta journalism are politically divergent. While Marietta's first newspaper, *The Ohio Gazette and the Territorial and Virginia Herald* (first issued 7 December 1801), was Jeffersonian in outlook, its successor, Caleb Emerson's *Western Spectator* (1810), was Federalist, and the most successful papers which followed - the *Marietta Gazette* of Emerson and Isaac Maxon, as well as Beman Gates's *Marietta Intelligencer* - were advocates of Henry Clay and the Whigs. By contrast, the current *Marietta Times* traces its heritage from the *Marietta and Washington County Pilot* (issued from 7 April 1826), the first Jacksonian Democratic newspaper in Marietta. Thus the community's newspapers can be roughly categorized as either conservative (*Gazette / Register*) or liberal (*Pilot / Times*), provided allowance is made for occasional fluctuations.

Before the appearance of the *Intelligencer*, newspapers were precarious business

propositions in Marietta. Royal Prentiss, whose part-ownership of the *American Friend* (a *Gazette* ancestor) lasted a record nineteen years (1814-33), admitted as much when he declared 'that the profit of the business is not sufficient to remunerate me for the money and labor actually expended in carrying it on'.³ Prentiss also claimed that had he himself not performed virtually all the mechanical tasks involved in running the newspaper, the *Friend* could not have continued. The *Marietta Intelligencer* was planned as a better investment from the start. There appears to have been general agreement among the young businessmen in Marietta on the need for an energetic newspaper which would effectively champion the program of Henry Clay and the Whig Party. True, Isaac Maxon's *Gazette* was pro-Whig, but Maxon was apparently viewed as an anachronism and his paper considered untenable. A newer, more vital vehicle was called for.

WHIG POLITICS AND THE BIRTH OF THE INTELLIGENCER

Featured in the *Intelligencer's* premier issue was a clearly stated rationale for what would be the newspaper's assiduous devotion to American politics. Almost fifty years had passed since George Washington had warned the nation about the evils of political parties. The Jeffersonians had triumphed over Hamilton's Federalists, resulting in virtual one-party rule during the presidency of James Monroe. Inevitably, partisanship returned to the American political arena when Andrew Jackson became the standard-bearer of the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans in 1824. His frontier populism could not fail to alienate New Englander John Quincy Adams and Kentucky's Henry Clay whose 'American System' was a blueprint for the establishment of sound, national finance and commerce. Clay's National Republicans, spiritual descendants of the Federalists, had become the Whig Party by 1832, and eight years later they would elect their first president. Beman Gates felt he had to impress upon Marietta's citizens the importance of electing Whigs, because he believed them to be responsible representatives and enlightened caretakers of the state and nation. The citizenry must study politics, declared Gates, for the country's welfare rests upon the decisions of government. Yes, there was corruption in politics, but all the more reason for honest citizens to become involved in order to reform the process.⁴

Martin Van Buren's presidency (1837-41) coincided with a major economic depression which greatly aided the Whig insurgency. The groundswell of public opinion that would turn the Democrats out of office in 1840 was not evident in Ohio in 1839 as Van Buren supporters held control of the state legislature. Even in Washington County, Democrat William A. Whittlesey outpolled Whig William R. Browning, though Marietta, the county's principal town, went Whig by 393 votes to 204.⁵ Of course the *Intelligencer*, just six weeks old, could not be expected to have a great impact on this election. Beman Gates, however, was already laying the foundation for Whig victories by regularly supplementing his own endorsements with articles reprinted from other Whig papers such as Ohio's *Cadiz Organ* and *Gallipolis Journal* as well as the *New York Whig* and *National Intelligencer*. Rebutting egalitarian arguments used on behalf of the Democrats, Gates pointed out that Alabama, a Democratic state, limited the vote to property holders while Vermont, pro-Whig, allowed universal manhood suffrage. Rejecting the notion that the Whigs were the 'property party'. Gates depicted the Democrats as a greedy group out for spoils.

Although the Democrats were the target of constant criticism throughout Beman Gates's tenure as editor, the word 'Democrat' rarely graced the pages of the *Marietta Intelligencer*. Instead, the party was referred to as the Locofocos, a name originally taken by an anti-establishment, New York Democratic faction which agitated against monopolies. The term

'Locofoco', derived from a type of match that was used to illuminate a meeting of the maverick Democrats held after the Tammany Hall regulars turned out the lights, was a badge of honour to the loyal adherent. Indeed, the Locofoco Party's biographer speaks of a true follower as one 'who has rejoiced in the light of Locofocoism, as an outward sign of the inward light of Christianity'.⁶ To the Whigs, however, the humorous-sounding name provided a convenient label with which to brand all Democrats as extremists. Thus, in interpreting the Locofoco / Democratic platform for his readers, Gates included such provisions as 'To the victors belong the spoils, low wages, ... extravagant expenditures of public money ... [and] opposition to sound and uniform currency...'⁷

Ohio's political climate appeared to present great opportunities for the Whigs, and their supporters in Marietta and all of Washington County were intent on doing their part. Standard-bearer William Henry Harrison had captured 52% of the state's vote – 54% in Washington County - in his unsuccessful attempt to defeat Andrew Jackson's protégé, Martin Van Buren, in the 1836 presidential election. Whig gubernatorial candidate Joseph Vance however, lost Washington County by fifty-two votes although he won election that year. Frustratingly, two years later, Vance would carry the county but lose the election to his Democratic opponent.⁸ The big victory which would carry the Whigs to power in county, state and nation seemed tantalizingly close yet still just out of reach. Success appeared to hinge on convincing a few more voters in each township and ensuring that they would turn out to vote on election day. A vigorous, popular newspaper could make the difference. Such was the rationale which led to the birth of the *Marietta Intelligencer*.

Isaac Maxon was understandably upset to see Marietta's business and political leaders abandon the *Gazette* in favour of their new creation. Not only would he lose their patronage, but they apparently intended to put him quickly out of business by underselling him - the *Intelligencer* would charge two dollars per annum to the *Gazette*'s \$2.50. Maxon decided to take his case to the people on 24 August 1839:

We understand the new paper, the *Marietta Intelligencer*, is to appear next week. This paper is to eclipse everything, exterminate democracy, astonish the natives and swallow the *Gazette* with all its appendages. It has been argued to some of our subscribers that they might as well discontinue the *Gazette* and subscribe for the *Intelligencer* because the *Gazette* must stop at all events. Had not the gentlemen better stay their judgment for a time, and see if the community will that we shall be crushed in order to rear a favorite upon a ruin?⁹

Maxon, determined to put up a fight, lowered his subscription price to match the *Intelligencer*'s. Rather than acknowledge the loss of advertisers as a serious blow, Maxon announced that the *Gazette* would now have room to present more interesting news. Such bravado, however, was a poor substitute for working capital.

Isaac Maxon's anger at Marietta's community could not have been ameliorated by considering their choice for editor of the new paper. Beman Gates was a nineteen-year-old native of Franklin County, Massachusetts who was on his way to Knoxville, Tennessee when he decided to stop over in Marietta in 1837. By all accounts an intelligent, energetic, talented teacher and singer, Beman Gates was still very young and inexperienced in 1839. Perhaps he projected the active, vital image sought by the town's businessmen, but it is doubtful that they seriously contemplated allowing young Gates to set editorial policy for the *Intelligencer*. Indeed, the choice of Gates as editor appears to lend credence to the view that Marietta's establishment had little regard for Maxon and his newspaper. So confident of success were the businessmen that they could afford to install a youth of twenty-one as a figurehead editor of their newspaper

and still out-compete the *Gazette*. They would generously finance the venture, and be willing to absorb financial losses in the beginning. They would also hire the 'Tyler boys', George W. and Charles D., as publishers. George Tyler was a master printer, having practised his craft as an employee of the *Pilot*. The Tylers proved their commitment to the new paper by selling their houses to raise \$600 for the cause. (Gates contributed \$300 which he had borrowed.)¹⁰

From the beginning, Beman Gates demonstrated a competence which belied his years. He was to play a more active, assertive role than the one which was likely envisaged for him by the newspaper's major investors. Nevertheless, it was a role which was to prove extremely gratifying to all those who subscribed to Whig ideals. In his introductory greeting to the readership, Beman Gates declared his personal integrity and independence:

The subscriber, in commencing his duties as editor, wishes it to be distinctly understood that he has no prejudices to foster, no partialities to indulge, and no invidious feelings to gratify ... He will not suffer himself to be influenced by the opinions of others in any way incompatible with perfect freedom of thought and action. He speaks particularly on this point because he has been charged with being under the control of influential men in this town ... He will be equally ready to bestow praise upon his political enemies when merited, or censure upon his friends when necessary.¹¹

Although Gates described his intended policy as one of 'impartial liberality', one is hard-pressed to locate a kind word for the Democrats in the pages of the *Intelligencer* during his seventeen-year editorship. Indeed, the word 'Democrat' itself was rarely used because it carried a complimentary connotation. Gates would be more even-handed in dealing with his political allies- criticism of various Whig factions is not all that uncommon.

Young Gates immediately demonstrated an appreciation of the importance of a newspaper to a community. Though a relative newcomer to Marietta, he announced in the *Intelligencer's* first issue that he was compiling a complete collection of Marietta's newspapers to date. Reporting that he had already acquired some issues of the pioneering Ohio *Gazette and Virginia Herald* from 1803, Gates invited his readers to see the appearance of a new newspaper as an historical event to be celebrated, just as one paid tribute to Venice's *Gazetta* (c.1589) and Boston's *News Letter* (1704) as the first recorded world and national newspapers.¹² Nor did Gates ignore the vital role news reporting could play in a nation's history, citing Lord Burleigh's accurate account of the size of the Spanish Armada in the *English Mercury* (an early news book) as crucial to Britain's ultimate victory.¹³

Regardless of its contents, the *Intelligencer* was an attractive, impressive newspaper. Somewhat larger than its predecessors (49.5 × 33 cm. as compared to the *American Friend's* 48.25 × 31.75 cm.), the first issue consisted of four pages of six columns each. Two columns on the second page were devoted to editorial comment promoting Whig politics, but six columns occupying part of pages three and four contained advertisements (job printing, schools, cutlery, dye stuffs, dry goods, groceries, drugs, hardware and cloth - silk, velvet, muslin). Three columns on page three consisted of correspondence, largely from other US newspapers (the *Albany Journal*, *New York Times* and *New York Courier and Enquirer*). As the paper prospered, advertising increased, extending to nine columns by 1840. Advertisements included produce (coffee, sugar, molasses), fish (herring, mackerel, shad and hake) as well as patent medicines (panaceas and vermifuge) for curing scrofula, rheumatism, syphilis, dysentery and worms. Tobacco, lamp oil and turpentine were also hawked. By 1855, using a five-column, four-page format, thirteen of the newspaper's twenty columns were devoted to advertising.

The *Intelligencer* appeared every Thursday morning from 29 August 1839 until 23 October 1851. On 28 October 1851 its weekly issue date moved to a Wednesday evening, and

the paper began to appear also as a tri-weekly with issues appearing on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings. Subscribers were charged three dollars per annum in advance. (The rate remained two dollars per annum for the weekly.)

JOURNALISTIC/POLITICAL SUCCESS

During the presidential election year of 1840 Beman Gates established the *Marietta Intelligencer* as an influential force in the community. The 'Tippecanoe-and-Tyler too' presidential campaign of the beloved old general William Henry Harrison successfully combined Andrew Jackson's populist appeal with conservative Whig business principles. Beman Gates became intimately involved in the effort, serving as Secretary and Treasurer of the Whig Central Committee in Washington County.¹⁴ Gates's friends and associates provided him with newsworthy political information from all over the state and from points east. In particular, William Parker Cutler, who held several elected offices, most notably Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, engaged the editor in a voluminous correspondence regarding public issues beginning in 1840.¹⁵ Noah L. Wilson, prominent Marietta businessman, kept Gates informed about Whig district decisions made at conventions in McConnellsville.¹⁶ The excitement of the period is clearly conveyed by Gates's friend Daniel Gregory Mason who wrote from Boston: 'Everything here is named after Harrison. Ladies wear gold cider barrels attached to their necks, and canes, pictures and badges without number are seen at every window... I wish I could make a call at your office this eve and sing some Harrison songs...'.¹⁷ Mason's letter has 'For Tippecanoe and Tyler Too' written vertically across the page and signs off 'Yours in bonds of Whiggery'. To the interested reader in the last decade of the twentieth century 'Whiggery' might seem every bit as ludicrous a term for a political movement as 'Locofocoism', but to Gates and Mason the two were as different as good and evil.

The *Intelligencer's* pages throughout 1840 serve as testimony to the growing groundswell of support for William Henry Harrison which Beman Gates helped to create. Harrison's life story, replete with glorious military victories, was recounted on the front page of the 2 January issue. Gates also reprinted pro-Harrison articles from other Whig newspapers such as the *Conneault Gazette*.¹⁸ Honouring his pledge to fairness, Gates also printed the transcript of President Van Buren's message to Congress, which had been forwarded to him by Representative Calvary Morris, but not without a complaint: '... owing to its great length we have not much room for anything else'.¹⁹ Perhaps even more important than coverage of the Whig candidate, the explosion of community activity in support of the campaign is clearly portrayed. Semi-organized 'Harrison and Tyler Meetings' or 'Conventions of the People of Ohio Friendly to the Election of Harrison and Tyler' were announced and covered throughout February and March. More formally structured were the Tippecanoe Clubs such as Washington County's whose entire constitution was printed in the 12 March *Intelligencer*. Local Whig enthusiasm was encouraged with promotion of the Harrison Fourth of July barbecue at Zanesville to which Marietta citizens were invited, and printing of the Harrison song 'Old Tip' sung to the tune of The Old Oaken Bucket'.²⁰

The election of Harrison as president represented the culmination of Whig aspirations, although the realization of success was slow in arriving. Without a national election day, voting was staggered by the states over several weeks. Mid-nineteenth-century communication systems meant several more days before results were disseminated. The first indications of Whig success were reported by the *Intelligencer* on 20 August with favourable returns in Kentucky, Indiana

and Missouri. By the time Ohio voters went to the polls in October the rout was on. Whig gubernatorial candidate Thomas Corwin defeated Democratic incumbent Wilson Shannon by 467 votes in Washington County, almost four times the Whig margin of 1838. Marietta's Whig majority was two and a half to one.²¹ By early November it was clear that a Whig electoral landslide was in the making. Harrison won Washington County by 652 votes, a record margin. Not coincidentally, the growth of the *Intelligencer's* subscription list paralleled the surge in Whig momentum, ensuring the newspaper's success.²² Even Isaac Maxon was forced to admit defeat on 4 December 1841, selling the *Marietta Gazette* to Edmund Flagg, former editor of the *Louisville Literary New-Letter*.²³ Flagg operated the paper until 21 January 1843 when it was purchased by the *Intelligencer*.²⁴

News of Harrison's death, one month after his inauguration, was reported on the black-bordered second page of the *Intelligencer's* 8 April 1841 issue, four days after the event. (Page one featured a minority committee report on banking and currency issues.)²⁵ The hard-fought Whig victory died with Harrison as Vice-President John Tyler, a Democrat, assumed the presidency. The next few elections were not kind to Beman Gates and the Ohio Whigs. Wilson Shannon recaptured the governorship, defeating Thomas Corwin by 3,443 votes in 1842, although Corwin took Washington County by 376. Even worse. Democratic nonentity James Knox Polk captured the White House two years later, defeating Whig Party leader Henry Clay (who won Ohio). The fact that the Whigs won back the state house with the victory of Highland County's Mordecai Bartley was some consolation. In addition, Gates was beginning to be recognized as a political force in Washington County, and was frequently consulted regarding likely candidates for state office.²⁶

The election of 1848 offered Gates and his newspaper the opportunity to help raise one more Whig to the presidency. The party's standard bearer, however, Zachary Taylor, was not initially among Beman Gates's preferred candidates. On 2 March 1848, shortly before the Whigs selected their candidate, the *Intelligencer* announced the death of former president John Quincy Adams. Both pages two and three were bordered in black. Adams, respected as the last statesman to occupy the White House before the advent of the Jackson / Van Buren era, had honoured Marietta with a personal visit on 15 November 1843. Arriving on the steamer, *Ben Franklin*, Adams was returning from Cincinnati where he had attended the laying of the cornerstone for the Cincinnati Observatory on 10 November. Marietta businessman Noah L. Wilson formally greeted the most renowned visitor in the city's history.²⁷ Adams's graciousness was in stark contrast to Henry Clay's refusal of a Wilson and Gates invitation to speak at a Washington County political rally in May 1841. The senator cited a policy of avoiding personal appearances at purely local gatherings.²⁸

Beman Gates preferred that a northerner be named Whig presidential candidate in 1848. If the party insisted on a Mexican War hero, Winfield Scott was his choice. Once Zachary Taylor secured the nomination, however, Gates's loyalty to the Taylor / Fillmore ticket was firm. His print facility was enlisted to produce Whig Central Committee circulars urging the defeat of Democratic candidate Lewis Cass and the venerable Van Buren, who was running on the Free Soil ticket. Such campaign literature included an attempt to convince anti-slavery Whigs that Taylor's assumed friendliness to the 'peculiar institution' would not be translated into policy.²⁹ Although Ohio gave Cass his largest margin of any state (16,247 votes), Washington County went for the victorious Taylor by 2,079 to 1,930.

THE 'ABDUCTION CASE' OF 1845

As an enthusiastic Whig, Beman Gates and the *Marietta Intelligencer* followed, participated in and reported the fortunes of the party from 1839 until its passing in 1852. Gates, however, was always aware of the importance of local and community issues. There were even occasions when local stories dominated coverage, forcing Whig political news into the background. The Ohio Abduction Case of 1845 was just such a story.

Beman Gates was absent from the paper when, on 9 July 1845, three Ohio Quakers - Creighton J. Loraine, Peter M. Garner and Mordecai E. Thomas - were abducted by a party of Virginians, and charged with aiding the escape of six slaves belonging to John H. Harwood of Virginia. The aid offered by the Quakers, all from Decatur township, consisted of helping the escaped slaves with their belongings out of a canoe. The Quakers were seized on the Ohio shore by a group of Harwood's neighbours who had learned of the escape plan and were awaiting the canoe's arrival. The Quakers, true to their beliefs, did not violently resist capture. They were carried across the river and imprisoned with five of the fugitive slaves (the sixth apparently having escaped) in Virginia.³⁰

By the time the *Intelligencer* caught up with the story two weeks later, Ohioans were calling on Governor Bartley to use the state militia, while Virginia's governor had already mobilized his state's forces in expectation of a rescue attempt. Gates sought to soothe tempers which were likely to erupt in violence. He declared that the justice of Ohio's cause must be demonstrated in the court room. There the state's legal representatives would maintain that Ohioans were not subject to Virginia law in Ohio, and that Ohio's citizens were seized without due process of law - in effect, kidnapped. As weeks passed, Gates called upon Ohioans to cease their verbal attacks upon both Governor Bartley for his passive behaviour and the state of Virginia for its justice system. Gates's position was that Virginia had erred, but may yet act responsibly.³¹

By the end of September the *Intelligencer* was denouncing postponement of the trial in Parkersburg (due to the illness of the prosecuting attorney) and refusal to grant the Quakers bail. At the same time Gates characterized as ignorant the more extreme criticism levelled by Ohio's Third (Liberty) Party which condemned what they termed Whig and Democratic 'servility to Slave power'.³² At its convention in Franklin County, the party called upon the governor to launch a rescue attempt or resign. In preparation for the rescheduled trial in November, Gates printed the opinion of future Supreme Court Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase (then solicitor of the Bank of the United States in Cincinnati). Chase's remarks, originally appearing in the *Ohio American*, maintained that Virginia had relinquished any and all claims to land west of the Alleghenies by the start of the Revolutionary War. Chase also cited common sense and the law of nations in stating that water boundaries between political units are located at the centre of the body of water. Virginia, therefore, had encroached on Ohio territory in seizing its prisoners.³³

Mail brought the report of the on-site *Intelligencer* correspondent, S. S. Cooke, on the trial proceedings in Parkersburg on 17 and 18 November in time to appear in the 27 November issue. Presiding Judge David McComas ascertained the facts of the matter without great difficulty, but the question of the proper boundary separating Virginia and Ohio was a matter of dispute.³⁴ As a result, the case was sent to Virginia's General Court at Richmond in December. Congressman Samuel F. Vinton, representing the Quakers, reiterated Chase's persuasive reasoning in contesting Virginia's claim of land ownership up to the Ohio shore. It mattered not, therefore, whether the Quakers had entered the water (as testimony maintained) to assist the escaped slaves.³⁵ The water in which they waded belonged to Ohio. After arguments concluded,

reliable sources were quoted in the *Ohio State Journal* predicting a verdict favourable to the Quakers. Defeat would necessitate an appeal to the Supreme Court.³⁶

At this point, Virginia implicitly acknowledged the weakness of its case by releasing the prisoners on one hundred dollars' bail each and pursuing the matter no further. While this face-saving gesture concluded the interstate confrontation, the six-month incarceration had reportedly left the Quakers' health permanently impaired.³⁷ The Ohio legislature was initially reluctant to allow the issue to conclude in this manner, threatening to bring suit before the Supreme Court in order to contest Virginia's boundary claims. The effort was abandoned after the debate pointed out that even Virginia's highest court was backing away from its state's original stance on the issue. In addition, appeal to the Supreme Court could prove risky given that Southerners held a 5-4 advantage on the bench.³⁸ The 'Abduction Case', however, had left its mark. Citizens of the town of Belpre mockingly hailed Virginians on the opposite shore to ask permission before watering their horses in the Ohio River.³⁹ As late as September 1846 the *Intelligencer* devoted two issues to reprinting Samuel Vinton's argument in defence of the abducted Quakers.⁴⁰ Before the 'Abduction Case', the issue of slavery had been treated by the *Intelligencer* as a political football, considered principally only in so far as its repercussions impacted on local and state election returns. The drama of the abducted Ohio Quakers reflected the deeper divisions of the nation as interstate animosity approached violence. Little wonder that over fifty years later the 'Abduction Case' was remembered as one of the most important events in Marietta history,⁴¹ highlighting as it did the antebellum tensions which would, before very long, lead to the Civil War.

BEMAN GATES AND TELEGRAPHY

Among the first to take advantage of new technology, Gates announced on 1 March 1849 that Zachary Taylor's inaugural address, to be delivered on 5 March, would be transmitted by telegraph to the *Intelligencer* the same day. Extra editions of the newspaper containing the speech would be issued and sold. The experiment proved successful as a correct copy of the historical oration was transmitted, printed and mailed out on inauguration day, a process that ordinarily would have been delayed for thirty-six hours while waiting for the train from Pittsburgh to arrive with the news.⁴²

In the autumn of 1846, two and a half years after Samuel Morse transmitted the first telegraph message in the United States over the Baltimore-Washington, DC line, telegraph wires had reached the Ohio River. On 11 August 1847 Columbus, the state capital, received its first telegraph message.⁴³ Beman Gates saw the opportunity to report state the *Intelligencer's* 'By Lightning' column made its debut, reporting the election of Ashtabula Whig leader Brewster Kandall as Speaker of the Senate on 7 December - the very day it occurred.

Of course, the telegraph permitted Gates to report events well beyond Ohio's borders. International economic and political news was conveyed as soon as the steamships bearing such information docked on the eastern shore. Thus, on 1 February 1849 the *Intelligencer* was able to report that the lower and not in demand, while Calcona in Spain was being plundered by the Carlists. In Portugal, the Cortez had been opened by the Queen in Libson, and the Austrian emperor was threatening war against England. On 1 March the arrival of the 'Europa' in Halifax brought news of steady trading breadstuffs in Liverpool, while cured provisions were in fair demand. On a sombre note, in the *Intelligencer* of 15 March reported that the 'Liverpool' had arrived in New York on 7 March with the bodies of forty persons who had died of cholera on the

voyage.

The *Ohio State Journal*, published in the state capital of Columbus, ninety miles to the northwest, clearly enunciated the dramatic change in news coverage ushered in by the telegraph. Editorializing in its issue of 3 August 1847, the paper dramatically described the revolution under way:

Within a very few days from the present, our City will be connected by that mysterious agency which abolishes time and space, with all the important cities on our sea board: whereby intelligence of whatever character, may be promulgated simultaneously in the Atlantic cities of the East, on the mountain tops of the Allegheny and in the broad valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi. Even now while this wonderful agent is posted on the river bank at Wheeling some 130 miles distant, it mocks at the efforts of the mails and proclaims to our people here in Columbus, all that is publicly interesting of their contents, long before the mail coaches commence their lumbering course of the eastern acclivities; and days after our readers have been in possession of such intelligence, and have made themselves familiar with its various bearings, along come the 'Extras' fitted up with so much care and enterprise by eastern publishers, to surprise and captivate their western readers Intelligence now travels with the celerity of light, and the thought is scarcely uttered in the farthest east until it is grasped and comprehended at various points throughout the vast expanse of the west.⁴⁴

At this point, the *Journal's* editor proceeded to explain to the readership that improved service entailed additional cost – an estimated \$900-1,500 per annum for telegraphic despatches. Consequently, while the *Ohio State Journal* would begin daily (rather than tri-weekly) publication on 11 August, subscription rates would increase from \$4 to \$7 per annum. (A weekly edition would continue to be available for \$2 per annum.)

In Marietta, the *Intelligencer* would experience similar changes. By June 1849 the newspaper's 'By Lightning' column began to live up to its name, relaying news obtained by telegraph within twenty-four hours. Thus the paper was able to inform Marietta readers on 14 June that there had been forty-three new cases of cholera and eight deaths in Cincinnati the day before. Previously, epidemic updates were frequently six days old. By June 1851 the latest *Intelligencer* news bulletins appeared under a caption which read 'News by Telegraph'. Four months later the paper began tri-weekly publication at an increased subscription rate.

THE INTELLIGENCER AS A FORCE FOR EDUCATION

Politics aside, Beman Gates and the *Marietta Intelligencer* worked consistently to improve the educational level of the community. Support for common schools was urged by the *Intelligencer* from the start, for they were '... the mighty engine by which government moves forward ...' and the 'lever and fulcrum by which ... to elevate our country...'.⁴⁵ Touting the virtues of public education, the *Intelligencer* reprinted the remarks of a young clergyman who had opted for public (rather than religious) schooling for his children: "'I shall not be so likely to watch over the school ... if my own children are not among them,'" declared the cleric, adding that the school that is provided for the community's children is good enough for his own'.⁴⁶ Gates saw public education as a means of strengthening the fabric of society by building citizenship. Properly educated students would learn to appreciate democratic, republican government and would not commit crimes against society.⁴⁷

Gates was a prime mover in the area of adult education as well. Serving as secretary of the New Lyceum of Marietta, he helped organize regular public lectures at the Library Hall on questions such as: 'Ought females to be sent as delegates to, or participate in deliberations of

conventions held for consideration of any subjects not political?' or 'Is the child of parents in a savage state capable of thorough scientific culture?'.⁴⁸ The monthly meetings occasionally featured guest speakers such as local physician, Whig activist and student of astronomy, Dr John Cotton, who delivered a scientific address at the January 1840 gathering.

The *Intelligencer* also covered meetings of the Washington County School Association such as the one addressed by William D. Emerson on 11 November 1840. The son of former *Marietta Gazette* editor, Caleb Emerson, William served as assistant editor in 1836 at the age of twenty-three. Born in Marietta, William Emerson was a former high-school teacher and graduate of Ohio University in Athens (1833). He was about to be admitted to the bar when he addressed the School Association, and would go on to publish the first map of Washington County (1845) and serve as county prosecuting attorney (1848) before entering private practice in Cincinnati.⁴⁹

MARIETTA'S BOOKSELLERS

In addition to actively promoting educational efforts, Beman Gates may be seen as a somewhat inadvertent purveyor of literary culture in Marietta, regularly printing advertisements which invited the public to visit the town's bookstores. During the first years of the *Intelligencer's*, existence no proper bookstore operated in Marietta. Instead, books were sold by retail merchants who specialized in other, more lucrative, wares. William H. Slocomb, of Slocomb & Buck Boots and Shoes, was just such a businessman. Migrating to Marietta from Massachusetts as an educator in 1816, Slocomb had entered into partnership with F. Buck by the time the *Intelligencer* began publishing. Books were added to the store's inventory after Marietta College was founded in 1835.⁵⁰ *Intelligencer* advertising indicates that by 1839 Slocomb was offering for sale a complete set of Eclectic grade-school texts published by Truman & Smith of Cincinnati including the primer, speller and reader as well as *Ray's Arithmetic*, *Miss Beecher's Moral Instructor* and *Mason's Young Minstrel*.⁵¹ Also available were *Mansfield's Political Grammar* (whose author, E. D. Mansfield, was Professor of Constitutional Law at Cincinnati College), the *Political Class Book* (explaining the origin, nature and use of political power), and Rev. Albert Barnes's theological works (*Notes on Romans*, *Acts*, *Gallatians* and *Gospels*).⁵² Books remained part of Slocomb's inventory throughout his career in retailing which lasted until 1855, when he moved to Rochester, New York. His partnership with Buck, however, had ended eleven years earlier when William's brother Silas joined the firm, forming W. & S. Slocomb. Samuel Bigelow joined Slocomb in 1848, and Slocomb & Bigelow continued to serve Marietta for the next five years.

Similarly, Marietta retailer Noah L. Wilson's extensive advertisements in the *Intelligencer's* pages boast of a full assortment of books and stationery containing all the texts used by Marietta College and principal L. Tenney's Marietta English School.⁵³ Although dry goods, cloth and hardware formed Wilson's stock in trade, books were prominently featured among his goods. In 1842, shortly before the nation emerged from the economic depression which had begun in 1837, Wilson announced in the *Intelligencer* that he was accepting 'dried apples, peaches, wheat flour, beans, flax seed and other country produce' in payment for debts incurred.⁵⁴ Such debts may well have included readers' purchases of *Olmsted's Philosophy*, *Woodbridge & Willard's Atlas*, *Webster's Dictionary* or the *History of the Sandwich Islands*, all of which Wilson had offered for sale the previous year, Noah Wilson was a Marietta native destined to serve as a trustee of Marietta College (1849-67) as well as a director of the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad (along with Beman Gates). His father, Stephen B. Wilson, having

migrated west from Virginia in the settlement's early days, opened a store at Post and Muskingum Streets in a building erected by Marietta pioneer, Earl Sproat. Noah would become one of Marietta's most notable civic leaders, welcoming distinguished visitors to the town and reading the Declaration of Independence before a crowd of 10,000 at Marietta's American Centennial celebration in 1876.⁵⁵

Intelligencer advertising indicates that at least one other Marietta merchant participated in the community's book trade - F. B. Loomis, whose motto was '[A] Nimble Sixpence [is] better than a slow shilling'. Loomis's Cheap Cash Store included *Arnold's Lectures on Modern History* at twenty-five cents, C. G. Rosenberg's *The Man of the People* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* among his wares.⁵⁶

The first true bookstore in Marietta was opened late in 1847 by W. H. Gurley.⁵⁷ Marietta's first genuine bookman operated his store in partnership with a succession of individuals about whom virtually nothing is known. The Gurley & Cross bookstore dealt principally in books and periodicals, and only occasionally in other goods. (They were authorized agents for Dalley's Pain Extractor which claimed to be therapeutic in the treatment of burns, scalds, sores, sprains and bites.)⁵⁸ In the catalogue-like advertisements which appeared in the *Intelligencer* Gurley & Cross offered subscriptions to a wide variety of periodicals such as *Godey's Ladies Book*, *American Literary Emporium*, *American Phrenological Journal*, *New York Observer* and the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* at one to three dollars a year. Also for sale were several copies of Marietta maps (originally sold at two dollars each, now going for fifty cents), and music (songs, choruses, dances, marches) for three cents a page.⁵⁹ The Mexican War of 1845-48 served as the subject of much of the literature then offered by Gurley & Cross, such as *Twelve Months Volunteer and the War with Mexico* by George C. Furber, Company G, Tennessee Regiment of Cavalry (\$2.50).⁶⁰

Book advertisements were larger and more plentiful in December as the holidays approached. The months of January and February were also favoured by booksellers (post-holiday sales) as well as May and June (new spring stock). Books offered for the holiday season in December 1848 included *The Power of the Pulpit* by Gardiner Spring (1785-1873), Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, *Orations of the American Revolution* by Elias Magoon (1810-86), Joel Tyler Headley's *Life of Cromwell*, and *The Middle Kingdom* by Samuel Wells Williams (1812-84).

New books advertised in June 1849 ranged in price from fifty cents (an inexpensive edition of *Macaulay's England*) to five dollars (*The Statesman's Manual*, containing all the messages of American presidents). Also offered were the moderately priced *Nature and Tendency of Free Institutions* (\$2.00) by the abolitionist Frederick Grimke; J. T. Headley's *Adirondack Mountains* (\$1.50); and *Mirror of Nature*, instruction and entertainment from the German (\$1.00).

In August 1849 Gurley entered into a new partnership, the bookstore changing its name to Gurley & Jewell. Its inventory, as advertised in the *Intelligencer*, appeared more esoteric. New acquisitions included *Narrative of the U.S. Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea* by W. F. Lynch, US Navy, Austin Henry Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains*, *Treatise on Epidemic Cholera* by Ambroise Fardieu, and *The Poetical Works of Martin Farquhar Tupper*. By November the new partnership was faring well enough to have purchased Slocomb & Bigelow's bookstock.⁶¹ Nineteenth-century etiquette is reflected in the offerings of 1850 which included *European Life and Manners* by Henry Coleman (1785-1849), Mrs (Elizabeth Fries) Ellet's *Evenings at Woodlawn*, and *Bowdler's Family Shakespeare*: 'In which nothing is added to the original text, but those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read

aloud in a family'.⁶² Family Bibles ranging in price from \$1.50 to \$10.00 were also available, while an account of the trial of Professor J. W. Webster for the murder of Dr George Parkman was offered for a mere fifteen cents.

C. W. Crawford succeeded Gurley in November 1851, renaming the business The People's Book Store and continuing at the same stand now designated as No. 20 Front Street. Three months later Crawford found himself in close competition with Edwin Fuller who opened the Marietta Book Store at 17 Front Street, only the town's second such establishment. Gurley's old business was purchased by J. C. McCoy, Jr in February 1854. Three years later McCoy sold out to C E. Glines who would operate the bookstore for the next thirty-eight years.⁶³

THE DEPARTURE OF GATES

By 1850 it appears that Beman Gates's interest in journalism and politics was beginning to wane. Gates had wed Miss Betsy Shipman of Marietta on 20 October 1841 and begun raising a family, which was to consist of a son and two daughters. On the political scene, yet another Whig president had died in office, Zachary Taylor's death in July 1850 making Millard Fillmore president. One senses a decrease in passion and partisanship about this time in the *Intelligencer*. Certainly, Millard Fillmore excited little interest in general, but his presidency went practically unnoticed by Gates. One also sees the word 'Democrats' appearing in the 1850s rather than 'Locofocos'. The demise of the Whig Party must have been disheartening for Gates. The *Intelligencer* supported the losing campaign of Winfield Scott in 1852, a year which saw the Democrats sweep to victory throughout the county and state. By 1854 Gates became involved in the management of the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad, assuming the duties of Vice President in 1855. Although he supported the appearance of the new Republican Party, successor to the Whigs, in 1854, it was apparent that Gates's personal and business interests were leading him in directions other than political journalism. Citing the need to devote more time to non-journalistic business affairs, Beman Gates bade farewell to the *Intelligencer* in a valediction which appeared in the issue of 2 April 1856. Dr T. L. Andrews purchased the newspaper, operating it until 1862 when he sold out to Rodney M. Stimson who renamed it the *Marietta Register*.

In addition to his interest in railways, Beman Gates became involved in banking (First National Bank officer from 1863 onwards), energy (Marietta Gas Company incorporator, 1867) and higher education (Marietta College Trustee, 1882).⁶⁴ Sadly, Gates's only son, Lieut. Charles Beman Gates, died at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, on 31 May 1864, of injuries received in a railway accident. He was just nineteen years of age.⁶⁵ One of Gates's daughter's, however, Mary Beman Gates, married Col. Rufus R. Dawes on 5 July 1864. Their son, Charles Gates Dawes, was destined to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925 for conceiving the 'Dawes Plan' which helped Germany meet her reparation obligations. He went on to serve as Vice-President of the United States (1925-29) during the administration of Calvin Coolidge.

It is said that Beman Gates often expressed regret that he had left the *Intelligencer*. Although he was to remain an influential businessman and prime mover in the Marietta community, perhaps he missed the sense of involvement which his journalistic days brought him. After all, Beman Gates had worked long and hard to instil the type of civic responsibility and sound business principles represented by Henry Clay and the Whigs, certain that the community would benefit greatly from his efforts. Similarly, he laboured to improve the educational level of the community through the establishment of schools, libraries and lyceums. In times of crisis he tried to substitute reasoned leadership for dangerous passions, and he always realized the

importance of obtaining information quickly and accurately before decision and action. It is not surprising, therefore, that when visiting Europe in the summer of 1868 Beman Gates scrupulously located and read two-week-old copies of the *New York Herald* in order to keep abreast of the latest news from America. Nor can one wonder that Gates's fondest memory of London appeared to be his private and unplanned visit to the King's Library of the British Museum where he wandered blissfully among the 700,000 volumes.⁶⁶

The death of Beman Gates in 1894 was keenly felt by Marietta. Gates's importance to the city was best stated in the obituary which appeared in the newspaper that serves the community today - the *Marietta Times*:

In his death we feel that Marietta has lost one of its great men; a man of ability, force and energy; a man whose presence was always felt in anything in which he engaged; one who as a faithful editor and as a successful businessman ... left his imprint which will not be effaced for years. In all parts of the county there will be sincere regrets that Beman Gates has been called hence.⁶⁷

NOTES

- 1 Andrew R. L. Clayton and Paula R. Riggs, *City into Town: The city of Marietta, Ohio, 1788 1988*, Marietta, Oh., 1991, p.11.
- 2 *History of Washington County, Ohio* [hereafter cited as *HWCO*], Cleveland 1881, pp.412-17.
- 3 *HWCO*, p.414.
- 4 'Attention to Politics', *Marietta Intelligencer* [hereafter cited as *MI*], 29 Aug. 1839, p.1.
- 5 *MI*, 10 Oct. 1839, p.3.
- 6 F. Byrdsall, *History of the Loco-foco or Equal Rights Party*, New York 1842, p.i (Dedication).
- 7 *MI*, 23 May 1844, p.2.
- 8 For county election tabulations see *The Tribune Almanac*, New York 1868. The publication changed title several times between 1838-68, and is known variously as *The Politician's Register and the Whig Almanac*, *The Politician's Register*, *The Whig Almanac and United States Register*, *The Whig Almanac and Politician's Register*. Horace Greeley is occasionally listed as publisher rather than the Tribune Company.
- 9 *Marietta Gazette*, 24 Aug. 1839, p.2.
- 10 *HWCO*, p.414.
- 11 *MI*, 29 Aug. 1839, p.1.
- 12 'Progress of Newspapers', *MI*, 29 Aug. 1839, p.1.
- 13 'Origin of Newspapers in England', *MI*, 10 Oct. 1839, p.1.
- 14 *MI*, 24 Sept. 1840, p.2, announces Gates as secretary; S. Fuller to Beman Gates, 14 Dec. 1840 (Manuscript Collection, Dawes Library, Marietta College), refers to Gates as treasurer.
- 15 See William P. Cutler's letters to Beman Gates throughout the 1840s (Cutler Collection, Dawes Library, Marietta College).
- 16 Noah L. Wilson to Beman Gates, 18 June 1841 (Cutler Collection).
- 17 Daniel Gregory Mason to Beman Gates, 4 Sept. 1840 (Cutler Collection).
- 18 'Why Should General Harrison Be Supported[?]', *MI*, 20 Feb 1840 p.2.
- 19 *MI*, 2 Jan. 1840, pp.2-3.
- 20 *MI*, 26 March 1840, p.1.
- 21 *MI*, 15 Oct. 1840, p.2.
- 22 *HWCO*, p.415.
- 23 *Marietta Gazette*, 4 Dec. 1841, p.2.
- 24 *HWCO*, p.414.
- 25 The *Intelligencer* followed the usual journalistic format of the era by relegating the most vital news to the second or third pages, while page one ordinarily featured serialized fiction, poetry, local history or excerpts from other newspapers.
- 26 See W. T. Bascom to Beman Gates, 23 July 1845; V. Rich to Beman Gates, 11 Aug. 1845 (Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Manuscript. Collection, VFM 2041).
- 27 *HWCO*, pp.432-3.

- 28 Henry Clay to John Colton [?], Noah L. Wilson and Beman Gates, 4 May 1841 (Manuscript Collection, Dawes Library, Marietta College).
- 29 Circular from Whig State Central Committee (loc. cit., VFM 2041).
- 30 Retrospective coverage of the case is reviewed in M. R. Andrews (ed.), *History of Marietta and Washington County, Ohio and Representative Citizens* [hereafter cited as *HMWC*], Chicago 1902, pp .142-4; the *Intelligencer* begins coverage with 'Abduction of Ohio Citizens', *MI*, 24 July 1845, p.2.
- 31 *MI*, 4 Sept. 1845, p.1.
- 32 'The Abduction Case', *MI*, 25 Sept. 1845, p.2.
- 33 'The Trial of the Abducted Citizens', *MI*, 10 Nov. 1845, p.1.
- 34 'The Trial of the Parkersburgh [*sic*] Prisoners', *MI*, 27 Nov. 1845, p.2; 'The Abducted Ohioans', *MI*, 4 Dec. 1845, p.1.
- 35 'Jurisdiction of Virginia', *MI*, 25 Dec, 1845, p.2.
- 36 'The Kidnaped [*sic*] citizens'. *MI*, 25 Dec. 1845, p.2.
- 37 *HMWC*, p.144.
- 38 'Ohio Legislature', *MI*, 22 Jan, 1846, p.2.
- 39 'Virginia Water', *MI*, 1 Jan. 1846, p.2.
- 40 'Substance of an Argument of Samuel F. Vinton for the Defendants in the Case of the Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Peter M. Garner and Others for the Abduction of Certain Slaves delivered before the General Court of Virginia at its December Term, A.D. 1845', *MI*, 10 and 17 Sept. 1846, p.1.
- 41 *HMWC*, pp.142-4.
- 42 *MI*, 1 March 1849, p.2; 'A Successful Experiment', *MI*, 8 March 1849, p.2.
- 43 Alfred E. Lee, *History of the City of Columbus*, New York 1892, pp.363-5.
- 44 *Ohio State Journal*, 3 Aug. 1847, p.2.
- 45 *MI*, 5 Sept. 1839, p.1.
- 46 *MI*, 24 Oct. 1849, p.1. The clergyman's words originally appeared in the *Common School Journal*.
- 47 *MI*, 24 Oct. 1839, p.2.
- 48 *MI*, 19 Dec. 1839, p.3; 19 March 1840, p.3.
- 49 *HWCO*, p.123.
- 50 Ibid., pp.479-80.
- 51 *MI*, 17 Oct. 1839, p.3.
- 52 *MI*, 11 June 1840, p.3.
- 53 *MI*, 17 Dec. 1840, p.4.
- 54 *MI*, 13 Oct. 1842, p.4.
- 55 *HWCO*, p.447.
- 56 *MJ*, 11 May 1843, p.3.
- 57 For a brief sketch of Marietta bookselling history see Thomas J. Summers, *History of Marietta*, Marietta, Oh., 1903, p.250.
- 58 *MI*, 3 May 1849, p.4.
- 59 *MI*, 24 Aug, 1848, p.3.
- 60 *MI*, 5 Oct. 1848, p.4.
- 61 *MI*, 22 Nov. 1849, p.3.
- 62 *MI*, 20 June 1850, p.3.
- 63 Summers, p.250.
- 64 *HWCO*, p.371; obituary, *Marietta Daily Register*, 17 Dec. 1894, p.4.
- 65 *HWCO*, p.252.
- 66 *Beman Gates Letters from Europe*, selected and prepared by Mary Dawes Beach, Chicago 1927, pp.32-8.
- 67 Obituary, *Marietta Times*, 19 Dec. 1894, p.4.